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HALS

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

Tudor Place, Washington, DC; south lawn and façade of house through historic tulip poplar; Jack E. Boucher, photographer, 1998.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DOCUMENTING AMERICA'S LANDSCAPE HERITAGE

What are historic landscapes?

Historic landscapes range from several thousand-acre rural farms and ranch complexes, to several acre urban plazas and parks, to a residence with a yard less than an acre. Like historic buildings, historic landscapes reveal aspects of our country's origins and development through their form, features, and the ways they were and are used. In fact, almost every historic property has a landscape component. Imagine a historic residential district without sidewalks, lawns, and trees; an agricultural complex with buildings but no fields, garden plots, or hedgerows; a densely populated city with no park system or plazas; or a Native American settlement with no gathering place, irrigation systems, or animal corrals.

Why should we care about historic landscapes?

Historic landscapes are typically "invisible" to both the public and policy makers. Hence, like many historic properties, America's historic landscapes are subject to loss and change through inappropriate use, development, vandalism, and natural forces such as flooding. When historic landscapes are publicly identified as significant, unique resources they become "visible" and can be incorporated into local, state, and federal planning and recording processes. Documentation of historic landscapes through research, photography and drawings is crucial to their preservation. We must act now to record our landscape legacy before it is too late.

What is happening to our landscape legacy?

The evolutionary nature of historic landscapes makes them fragile and highly vulnerable to loss and alteration. Sprawl claims over one million acres of farmland each year. Road widening projects disturb the rolling splendor of scenic parkways. Redevelopment undermines historic industrial landscapes. Modernization of urban centers impacts the park and plaza master works of landscape architects from the late-1800s to today. Incompatible development warps neighborhood parks and estate landscapes. The collective story of these places needs to be captured and documented for future generations.

BACKGROUND IMAGE
Tudor Place, Washington, DC; view through south portico of south lawn; Jack E. Boucher, photographer, 1998.

DOCUMENTING AMERICA'S LANDSCAPE HERITAGE

The Historic American Landscapes Survey

In an effort to preserve, protect and interpret America's significant and threatened historic landscapes, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the National Park

Stratford Hall, Stratford, Virginia; east garden and elevation of house; Jack E. Boucher, photographer, 1969.

Service (NPS) and the Library of Congress (LoC) cooperated to create the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) program.

HALS is modeled on two existing historic resource documentation programs: the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER). Established in 1933, HABS comprehensively documents historic American architecture. Established in 1969, HAER documents historic sites, structures, and objects associated with the development of engineering, industry, and maritime resources. Growing interest in historic landscape research, planning, and stewardship, underscores the value of a parallel program devoted to historic landscape documentation. To date the three programs have documented over 40,000 structures and sites, with these records publicly available through the Library of Congress.

BACKGROUND IMAGE
Woodlands Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; general landscape plan; Courtney L. Gunderson, delineator, 2004.

The Intent and Focus of HALS

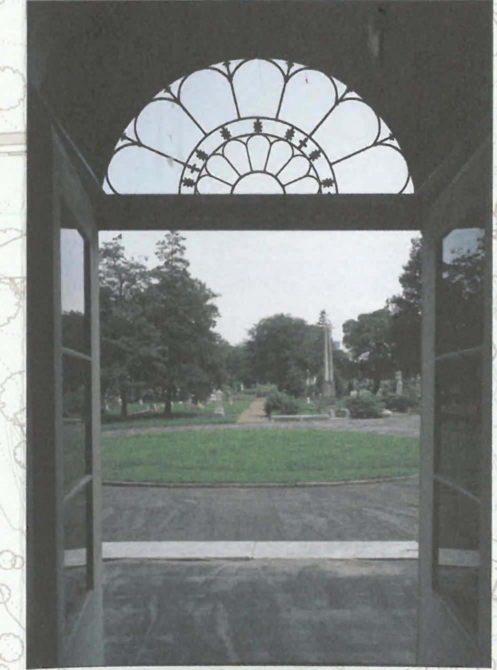
Recognizing the value of landscape documentation, the National Park Service established HALS as a permanent federal program in October 2000. HALS builds on HABS and HAER documentation traditions, while expanding the range of stories that can be told about human relationships with the land. HALS documents the dynamics of landscapes, as HABS and HAER have documented unique building and engineering structures and systems. Although the HALS program has officially been established, the effort to comprehensively develop the program needs your support.

Teams of students and interested professionals in landscape architecture, architecture, planning, horticulture, and related disciplines conduct fieldwork for HALS as short term projects. Guided by HALS documentation specialists, the participants record significant historic landscapes nationwide through measured and interpretive drawings, large-format photography, written narratives and other documentation techniques. The results not only document significant landscapes, but instill a greater understanding of the relationship between land and history for the participant and the related community.

North Family, Mount Lebanon Shaker Village, New Lebanon, New York; view east from left to right of the Sister's Shop, stone walkway, and daylilies and hostas growing along the north side of the Second Dwelling House; James W. Rosenthal and Renee Bieretz, photographers, 2009.

Promoting this critical ethic among future stewards and design professionals mirrors ASLA's own stated purpose: "The advance of knowledge, education, and skill in the art of landscape architecture." Through their existing documentation programs, HABS, HAER and HALS have educated thousands of professionals over the past 80 years.

The location, duration and complexity of HALS projects are determined on the basis of historical significance, landscape type, state of endangerment, and potential partnership opportunities. HALS works with the ASLA; state, local, and national preservation organizations; academic institutions and other interested parties to develop projects and explore funding possibilities for both short and long-term efforts.



Woodlands Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; view looking north from house into circular driveway and cemetery beyond; Joseph Elliott, photographer, 2003.

Briarwood, The Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve, Saline, Louisiana; view of bay garden; James Rosenthal, photographer, 2004.

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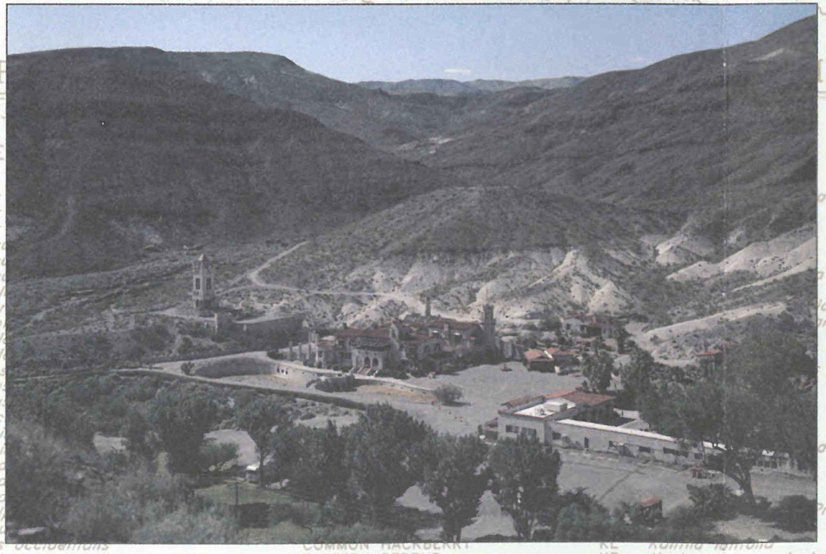
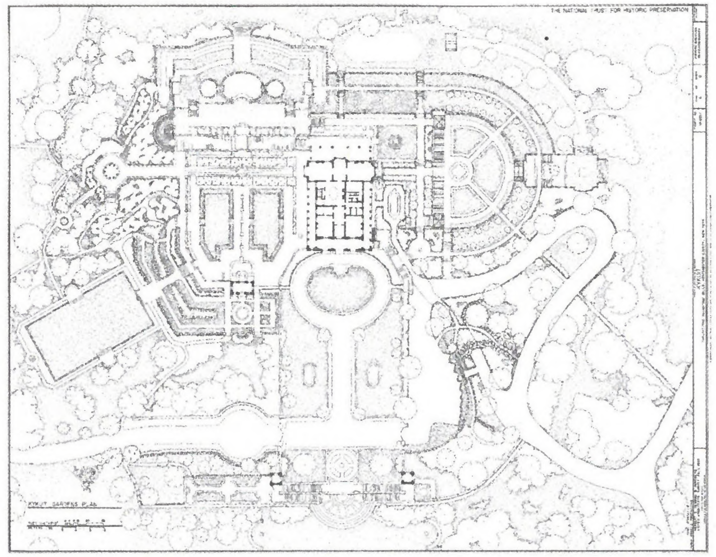
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Vermont; view from the east entry door across the veranda and the big meadow of the Billings Farm and Museum to Blake Hill; Jack E. Boucher, photographer, 2002.

Partnerships between HALS, private practice firms, academic institutions, and like-minded preservation and landscape organizations benefit all parties. Standard documentation methods have been developed, landscape preservation professionals have been educated, and long-term relationships have been established. Consider the role that your firm, university or organization could play in the development of HALS. Could they sponsor a project or offer support services?

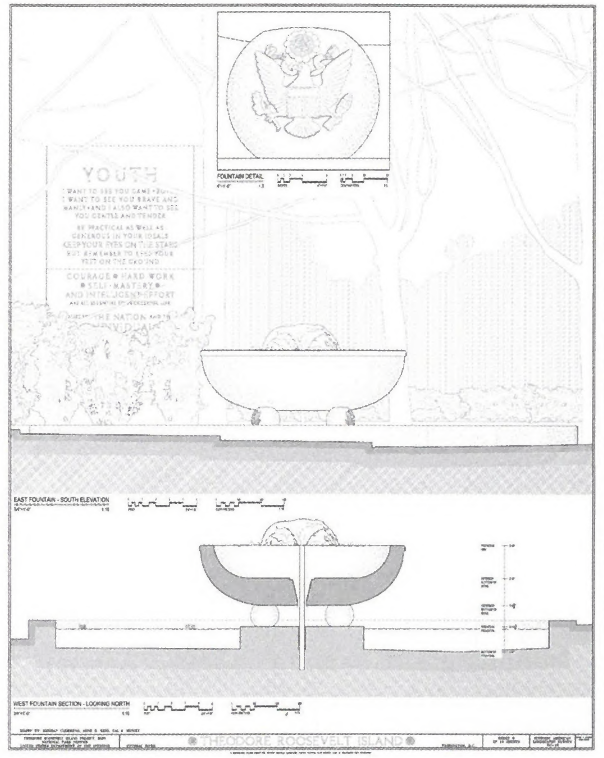


Scotty's Castle, Death Valley National Park, California; general view looking west; Jack E. Boucher, photographer 1989.

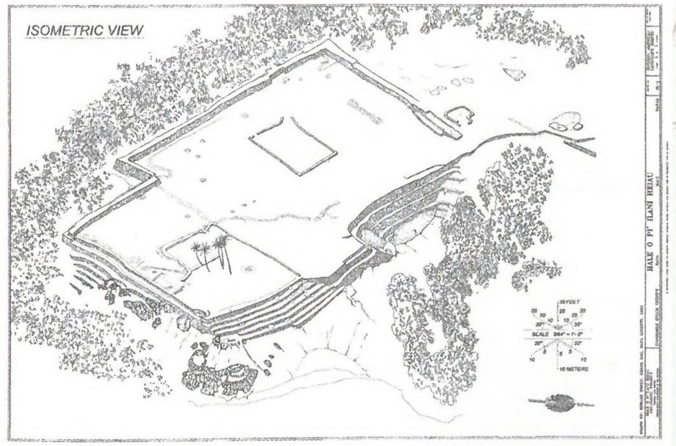


Kykuit, Pocantico Hills, New York, garden plan;, Ivano D'Angella and Angelo Procaccino, delineators, 1991.

John Bartram House & Garden, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; general view of the stone retaining wall looking west towards the house; Joseph Elliott, photographer, 2002.



Theodore Roosevelt Island, Washington, DC; east and west fountains; Meghan Clemmens, Anne E. Kidd, and Cal J. Mincey, delineators, 2007.



Hale O Pi'ilani Heiau, Maui, Hawaii; isometric view, Edward Byrdy, Khanh Dao, and Dana Lockett, delineators, 2003.

BACKGROUND IMAGE
John Bartram House & Garden, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; landscape plan; David Calderon, delineator, 2002.

Past Landscape Documentation Efforts

While HALS is the first permanent federal program to focus on historic landscape documentation, it is worth noting that examples of landscape documentation already exist. Since the 1900s landscapes have been recorded at local, state, and federal levels, but never systematically. Beginning in the 1930s, the Garden Club of America undertook an inventory and documentation of "gardens and gardeners of the American colonies and the Republic before 1840."

Mount Vernon Square, Baltimore, Maryland; view of the Washington Monument with Peabody Conservatory in the foreground; Renee Bieretz, photographer 2009.

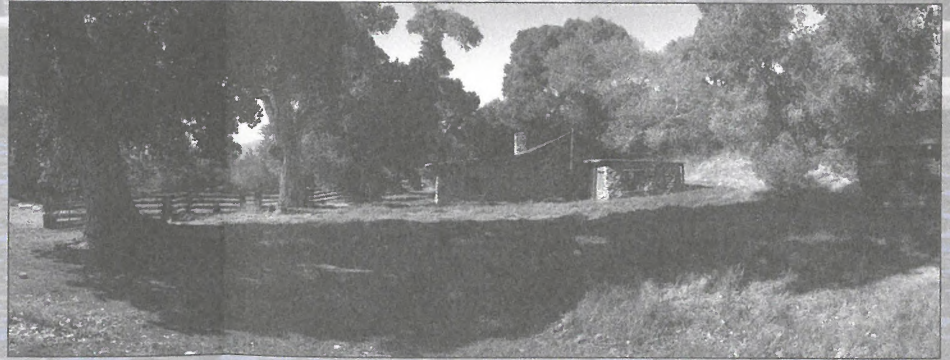
This effort led to the publication of the seminal two-volume Gardens of Colony and State. Interest in Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and his park legacy, inspired the 1983 Massachusetts Association of Olmsted Parks' effort to document the history, design, and existing conditions of parks planned by Olmsted, Sr., his son and stepson, and their successor firm in the thirty seven states. By 1984, the ASLA Historic Preservation Open Committee developed a model survey form to assist with historic landscape survey and documentation. Landscape recording efforts have occurred on local and statewide levels, typically emphasizing specific landscape types and are completed with the assistance of community volunteers, university faculty, students, and specialized consultants. Some examples of the local and state efforts include the landscapes of Syracuse and Rochester, New York; Missouri; Chicago's Burnham Plan; and Pierre L'Enfant's plan for Washington, DC.

At the federal level, both HABS and HAER have produced some historic landscape records, while undertaking primary documentation of historic structures and engineering resources. Simultaneous to the Garden Club of America efforts, ASLA members worked with HABS in the 1930s on the Historic American Landscape and Garden Project, recording over 40 historic gardens in Massachusetts and influencing the early landscape documentation efforts in HABS in other states. Other HABS historic landscape documentation projects include Meridian Hill Park and Dumbarton Oaks Park in Washington, DC and the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. Since the 1980s, HAER Roads and Bridges Documentation Project increasingly have incorporated aspects of landscapes into their recording projects. HAER projects notable for historic landscape content include road and bridge documentation in Acadia National Park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkways.

For more information about the HALS program, or to access the HALS Guidelines for Drawings, History, or Photographs, visit our website: **http://www.nps.gov/history/hdp/.**

Visit us on Facebook: ***http://www.facebook.com/HeritageDocumentationPrograms.***

The HABS/HAER/HALS Collection is available through the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division via the internet: ***http://loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/.***



Tassi Ranch, Grand Canyon-Parashant Monument; view of ranch house; Jet Lowe, photographer, 2009.

BACKGROUND IMAGE
Meridian Hill Park, Washington, DC; view of cascade; Jack E. Boucher, photographer, 1985.